

# Blended experience

Students learn how to  
run a business  
through DSU  
entrepreneur program

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## Learning how to blend a business

DUXBURY STUDENT UNION

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**B**lended smoothies, hot pretzels, cappuccino and a plethora of students; sounds like your average college student union, but behind the counter whipping up the frosty creations are kids, most not old enough drive.

The Blender Café located inside the main room of the Duxbury Student Union is a student run entrepreneur education and craft service. Members ages 12 through 17, or seventh grade through seniors in high school, can gain work experience as well as the benefits of the student union through the Blender program.

Not only do the students learn the value of a dollar, they also volunteer for a good cause. Cash is not the method of payment for these eager business owners, for each shift they work they earn one free smoothie of choice, plus the added bonus of keeping all of the tips earned, which can range from 15 cents to \$2.

Debby and Bob Jewell thought of a student café when they were first conjuring up the concept of the student union. Bob came up with the idea of taking the café one step further and making it a learning experience for the students where they would learn about running a business and being in charge of everything from the money to the preparation of the food.

"They do everything from counting the draw and subtracting the starting bank to find out the profit, to cleaning stocking and inventory," Debby Jewell said.

Jewell said the program has become so popular she has a waiting list for students wanting to volunteer and take part in the business. The Blender is run with anywhere from one to three students per shift, the majority being a two-person shift. In the beginning each shift was supervised by a parent volunteer, but now they are able to run the café on their own, with of course the help, if needed, of a DSU staff member, she said.

Each month Bob Jewell and Fred Lizza conduct teaching sessions where the students learn about everything from how to start a business and the history of some of the most well known business in the world like Wal-Mart and McDonald's. It is also an opportunity for the staff to discuss opportunities for improvement and areas that are working well. The group discusses promotional ideas and ways to draw in more business and ways to make their business more known by the public like offering coupon deals and free smoothies periodically.

"I've learned a lot about how to start your own business, different investments to make, how to make a smoothie, and nutritional value," seventh grader Alex Tinkhan said.

All the products that go into the smoothie are all natural with no sugar added. Each flavor has the option of adding proteins and vitamins to help boost immunity, or cure a cold like the "sniffles be gone" smoothie. Many of the staff members have created their own signature smoothie like the "tootie frutti" currently being concocted by seventh graders Christina Curley and Mattie Conway. The girls are taking extreme care with their product by planning it out to come up with the perfect ingredients and testing it with their one free smoothie per shift.

The DSU and the Blender Café is not only an educational experience it is also provides friendships and blends different age groups.

"I got involved because I had just moved here and I wanted to meet people and thought I would be a good idea," sophomore Preston Tripp, who just moved to Duxbury from Wilmington, Delaware, said.

"I like how it connects students from different ages in one place," freshman Ian Grant said.

Sophomore Allie Hill said the experience offered at the DSU is good to learn how to use a cash register and learn about working since she has never had a job before.

"Through the program kids know how to operate a business and have experience for life," she said.

The students also learn a lot about responsibility. At the start of each shift they have to get everything going and turn all the equipment on, and each night they are responsible for going through a checklist of closing work that includes cleaning and washing all the equipment and properly keeping the café stocked. Seventh grader Kathleen Torney said the experience has taught her about keeping things very neat and orderly and how to treat customers.

"We learn a lot about what goes into starting a business," freshman Bill Jewell added.

Since the start of the Blender Café the students have already experienced the growth and changes that a starting business goes through in the first few months. They have worked out some of the earlier kinks, realized what foods the kids want, what their peak hours of operation are, and how to manage their customers, who are essentially their friends and their peers.

The Blender Café is more than just an entrepreneur program it is also a full run business with all profits benefiting the DSU. As Bob Jewell talked with the students sharing tips in how they can help build the business he said the most important thing for them to do is to let their peers know that the Blender Café is open to the public, not just DSU members.

"Anyone can come in and buy and taste a smoothie or a

Coming soon the Blender will also have a take-out window for the public and adults who want to stop in a grab a smoothie without having to come into the DSU.

As part of the program the students also have had the opportunity of visiting other businesses in town. Over the holidays the group went to Entrée Vous where they received first hand experience on running a food business and preparing foods.

"The program teaches them real life skills and how to understand how a business works and how they can apply math skills and social studies skills learned in school," Debby Jewell said. "The long term gain is they will learn how to run their own business and some understanding. In a year or two some will have a job and they will have understanding of how a business works and appreciation of all that goes into it."





Student Council Union workers Grace Nissl and Taylor Tobin with their designer Smoothies!

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Allie Hill



DSU staff Emily Semprini samples an original smoothie created by student workers Taylor Tobin and Grace Nissi.

STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS BERNSTEIN